Report of the Second Special Training Program in Administration

Organized by the International Cooperation Administration

and the U. S. Department of Agriculture

for Foreign Agricultural Officials

"PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT"

June 4, 1956 - June 29, 1956

U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

by

O. B. Conaway, Jr., Program Director

PREFACE

In the course of organizing training programs for employees of foreign agricultural agencies the International Cooperation Administration and the Foreign Agricultural Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture realized that some of the officials invited to this country need training in administration as well as in their respective technical fields. Accordingly, the two agencies organized an experimental special program in administration for selected foreign officials which was given in September, 1955. The results of this two-week program seemed to warrant organizing similar, and somewhat more extensive, programs for successive groups of foreign agricultural officials.

During the winter of 1955-56 the Foreign Agricultural Service negotiated an agreement with the Graduate School of the USDA for the organization and direction of two training programs in public administration, each to be four weeks in duration, in 1956. This agreement provided that the Assistant Director of the Graduate School would serve as director of the two programs. The first program of 1956 was held from June 4 through June 29 in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. There follows an account of the objectives, organization and methods of that program, an evaluation of the program by the participants and an evaluation by the program director together with his recommendations for the second program of 1956 to be held from September 10, through October 5.

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Program Director

OBJECTIVES OF THE SPECIAL PROGRAM

The general objective of the program was to increase the capacity for effective management of selected program officials of foreign governments. The 14 men selected for this course included six economists, two veternarians, two extension specialists, a fiber technologist, a lawyer engaged in program planning, a horticulturalist and a professor of agricultural economics in the National University, Republic of China. With the exception of the professor of agricultural economics each of these men had substantial administrative responsibilities.

The plan for reaching this objective was, first, to emphasize the importance of administration in government programs and stimulate thinking about administration. Second, to present American concepts of administration using theories and practices of the USDA as examples. Third, to assist members of the group with personal administrative problems insofar as possible. The course, thus, was primarily one of general administrative ideas with examples of application from USDA programs. It was not an effort to produce specialists in administrative activities and was not a "workshop" in the sense of an intensive group effort on a given problem. Nor was it a seminar for research on administrative problems or a symposium on the administration of a selected agricultural program. In the latter part of this report there is some discussion of the feasibility of using some of these teaching methods in this program.

PROGRAM

The curriculum of the first course is given in some detail in the announcement and it does not seem necessary to repeat it here. That announcement should be considered a part of this report.

The first three weeks of the program were devoted entirely to class work. The group met daily at 10:00 and 1:30 for two-hour sessions. In the fourth week three days were used for observation of the administration of agricultural programs in Washington County, Maryland. The last two days of the program were given to a summary of proceedings and to evaluation.

TEACHING STAFF

The lectures in the course were given by individuals who were invited to participate because of their attainments in the administrative fields they were asked to discuss. Of the 30 speakers in the program, 29 were selected from USDA agencies. As the program director, I did not deliver any of the general lectures in the program. My activities in this phase of the program included introductions to each major topic, comments on the inter-relations of administrative functions, summaries of lectures on the major topics and the leading of discussions sessions.

To say the least, the cooperation of the Department's agencies in this project was excellent and all of the individuals invited to give lectures displayed genuine interest in the program. A majority of the speakers prepared outlines of their addresses and some of them a manuscript for the use of the members of the group. All of them, as discussed further below, provided the class members with USDA documents related to their respective topics. We urged the use of visual materials in the classes and some speakers did so very largely in their lectures. In the course generally films, slides, posters, charts, and illustrated documents were used extensively.

The first hour of the two-hour class sessions was devoted to whatever general statement the lecturer wished to make and the second to a class discussion of the topic of the day and the remarks of the lecturer. The respective speakers took principal parts in these discussions and usually were questioned at length. As a result of some discussions the lecturer arranged individual conferences for class members and provided further documentary materials.

In my opinion the quality of the lectures delivered in the program was generally very good and I believe their evaluation of the program indicates that the class members concurred in that judgment. On the other hand, there are certain weaknesses in the use of an ad hoc faculty whatever the advantages of special knowledge. With the best of intentions on the part of the speakers and the program director it is difficult to coordinate the respective lectures. Second, the occasional lecturer cannot gain the intimate knowledge of a group that guides the sole teacher.

MATERIALS

The lecturers in the program selected and distributed to the participants a very large amount of documentary material. While the quantity of such materials is not of first importance it is interesting to note that some 90 USDA documents were supplied to the members of the group. The interest of the participants in these materials was especially keen and their examination of them frequently led to requests for others on the same subjects.

In addition to documentary materials a text was used in the course, L. D. White's Introduction to the Study of Public Administration, in which weekly assignments were made. The participants were asked specifically during the evaluation if they had found the text substantially useful and would recommend its continued use in the course. The reply was entirely positive. I concur in this opinion.

PARTICIPATION OF GROUP MEMBERS IN THE CLASSES

A deliberate effort was made to stimulate the group members to participate in the class sessions. A very considerable amount of participation was secured which was due primarily to the quality of the group. The selection of these participants was good and one of the pleasant developments of the program was the realization that these men had had enough experience in administration to be genuinely interested in the program. Thus it was possible to conduct the lectures and class discussions on a generally higher plane than was expected when the program was planned.

A number of devices were used to stimulate participation by the class members. First, three written assignments were made at the beginning of the program. Each class member was asked to submit a description of the position that he held, a statement of any special administrative problems with which he was currently confronted and a short, general statement of what his government was doing to improve the quality of its administration. We did not obtain all of these statements from each participant but the ones received were quite useful in planning lectures, directing discussions and arranging special conferences. Materials of this kind, however, should be contributed by the group members at the beginning of the program rather than at the end of the first week as was the case in this instance. Thus these assignments will be made in advance of the opening of the second program in September.

Second, members of the group were assigned responsibility for leading its discussions of the respective lectures. As stated above, we tried to divide the two-hour class sessions equally for lecture and discussion with a short intermission between the hours. Each day two members of the class were asked to lead the discussions with special reference to the applicability of the ideas and practices which had been presented in their countries. This system helped considerably to begin discussions and to focus them on situations in the countries represented.

Third, a student trainee from Mount Holyoke College was assigned to the Training Division of the FAS for the summer. The Training Division in turn detailed the young lady to this special program with the assignment of helping the members make a daily summary of the proceedings. While the trainee was primarily responsible for this summary a member of the class was assigned at each session to assist her. Each member of the group served in this capacity for two sessions. At the close of the program the trainee and the group members had compiled a detailed record of the class sessions. This document has been submitted to the Training Division and, resources being available, may be reproduced for distribution to the participants in the program. While the making of this record interested the group and stimulated much informal discussion outside the class sessions, I doubt this activity would be feasible unless a person were available to lead it for the clerical work in addition to personal note-making and reading assignments would be quite a burden.

Fourth, the program for four of the class sessions was presented by members of the group. The programs presented were, "Program Planning in the Greek Extension Service," "The Organization of the Department of Agriculture of the Indonesian Republic," "Personnel Administration in Thailand" and, "The Public Relations Program of the Government of the Philippines." The assignment of these programs to various individuals and groups in the class was a notably successful device for obtaining participation. Such presentations were very stimulating to the members of the group and the interest in these sessions probably was greater than in any others in the program. These sessions became, in a real sense, forums for the discussion of respective experiences and in the course of them there was some actual group analysis of the problems presented. I was told by members of the group that these sessions were among the most valuable ones in the program in that they helped to satisfy curiosity about other governments, indicated common administrative problems and contributed to an esprit de corps. This device should be continued so far as possible in future programs although I do not think more than four or five such sessions in each program would be feasible.

PERSONAL COUNSELING

In the course of the program I had at least one personal discussion with each member of the group in which I tried to ascertain the individual's special interests in administration. If I found the general program would not satisfy those interests, special conferences were arranged with officers of the USDA. In some cases the need was met by compiling special sets of documents. In this respect, as in all others of the program, the agencies of the Department were most cooperative.

FIELD OBSERVATION

The use of three days of the program's twenty for field observation seemed well justified by the results. The participants were enabled to observe the application by local officials of some of the theories and practices that had been presented to them during the previous three weeks. As many of them commented, it gave a great deal of substance to the program in general and some members of the group thought the field sessions among the most useful of the program.

In arranging the field observations of this group we received the full cooperation of the Maryland Extension Service. The Maryland State Director of Extension assumed considerable responsibility for this phase of the program and participated personally in it. The Extension and Federal personnel in the county selected showed great interest in the program and presented some of their activities most effectively. I think field observations should be a part of all future programs but it is obvious that their value will depend largely on the extent to which the cooperation of state and county agricultural personnel can be obtained.

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CLASS EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

The formal evaluation of this program was done notably well by members of the staff of the FAS Training Division. The detailed evaluation report should be considered a part of this report and as copies of it have been sent to those concerned with the program I shall comment only on certain major points in it. The participants seemed to understand quite well the general and specific objectives of the program and I think evaluated accurately the degree to which those objectives were reached. First--in re the presentation of American concepts of administration using the USDA as an example--the group's opinion was that this had been done, "fairly well." I would not give this part of the program a higher rating. The comments of the participants, however, and our experience in this program should make the fall one more effective in this respect. Some recommendations to this end are given below.

Second--in re the effort in the program to emphasize the importance of administration and stimulate thinking about it--the group's opinion was divided between "fairly well" and "partly." I do not think that the program was good enough in this respect. More attention should be given to the orientation of the participants in future programs and some revision of the first section of the curriculum is needed. Some suggestions in this respect are given below.

Third--in re the effort in the program to assist individuals with specific administrative problems--the group's opinion was that the program was least effective in this respect. I think this a correct judgment but I much less concerned about shortcomings in this respect than in the others discussed. While assistance with specific administrative problems is a reasonable objective of a program of this kind, it must necessarily be a secondary one. The assistance we can give in such programs on specific problems must be general in nature and in such forms asconferences with specialists of the Department or special documentary information. To attempt to offer more detailed assistance than this would alter the course basically. An example of the implications of efforts to deal with specific problems in detail is the familiar one of the foreign official who asks for aid in constructing a wage scale for his government.

The evaluation of the lectures by the group as to relative importance and the emphasis and discussion given the various topics has been useful in revising the program for the fall session. The group also made a number of suggestions for the conduct of the sessions which have been considered in preparing the revised program attached to this report. Finally, the group indicated that certain decisions about the program were sound: that one month is an appropriate period, that the coverage was adequately comprehensive, that there were not too many lectures, that the course was not too technical, that the participants had enough opportunity for personal participation and that the ratio of classroom time to field observations was about right.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM BY THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The organization of this program was admittedly an experiment as was the first public administration in agricultural development program in the fall of 1955. Our problem was to increase the capacity for management of a group of specialists in various agricultural activities from a number of countries. And while the program in the fall of 1955 had yielded much useful information we still were making a more-or-less informed guess as to the kind of program that would be useful to the participants. We decided to attempt to show the importance of formal attention to the administration of agricultural programs and to present the administrative theories andpractices of the USDA. I think our decision as to the type of program which should be organized was approximately correct and my opinion is supported by both the formal evaluation by the participants as well as their comments to me during the course. The members of the group had had enough administrative experience to be interested in the ways the USDA deals with some of the same problems with which they now are confronted. None of the topics in this course was wholly new to the participants as they either had worked on the same problems or practices or knew something of experience with them in their own governments. Thus the proceedings of the classes were not at an elementary level and at times amounted to a symposium on comparative administration. Given the diversity of such a group, which is likely to be the case in each program, I think we have adopted the right general approach.

There is one alternative approach that might be tried in a future program--to make the course one on the administration of a given agricultural program such as soil conservation. Such a course could be so organized as to present in balance both the program and management aspects of administration. This approach has, in some situations, been an especially effective way of teaching management for it gives a special relevance to discussions of its part in administration and its theories and practices. This approach could be used only if it could be determined well in advance that the participants were interested to some extent in the program to be used as the model. Another prerequisite would be the willingness of an agency of the department to serve as the model. The cooperating agency in a project of this kind likely would find that the program would produce a training course of value to its own personnel.

In some of the discussions of this program there have been questions about the amount of technical content in the lectures. It is not easy to answer such a question although some of the lectures in the past program were quite technical in part. It seems to me that the objective of a program determines its technical content and that in any general program there will always be a conflict between breadth and depth. In most of the lectures of tho past program I thought there was a fair balance of breadth and depth although this must vary with individual interest. And so long as we are organizingfor a diverse group of technicians I doubt that we can expect to do more than strike an average for the subjects presented. Certainly the training of specialists in administration is outside the scope of this program as now conceived.

Turning to the lecture program, my principal criticism is that it lacked in parts both enough generalization and enough detail. By lack of enough generalization I mean, first, that the introduction to public administration was not adequate in that it did not present fully the function of administration in government, the scope of administration and the responsibilities of the administrator. Second, the introduction to some of the major administrative functions did not present adequately its place in the whole of administration, its relation to other administrative processes and its principal objectives. On theother hand, the lectures on some topics were deficient in that they did not present the methods used by administrators and their staff assistants in such detail as to indicate their value.

I propose to attempt to correct the first of these defects by expanding the orientation section of the program and by scheduling an introductory lecture at the beginning of the consideration of the respective administrative processes. I also expect to give the orientation lectures and the introductory lectures for the various administrative processes.

The action proposed above should help to correct the lack of sufficient detail in some lectures by relieving the special lecturers of the necessity of dwelling long on the general purposes, for example, of in-service training. Thus many of them will be able to--and should--make their lectures ones on how a particular administrative activity is organized and directed. How, to use the same example, a training program is planned and actually managed. The addition of several such lectures, which would be somewhat in the nature of case studies, should increase the effectiveness of the course as a whole.

Finally, as indicated above, to deepen the coverage in the manner suggested it will be necessary to reduce the number of topics in the course. Such a reduction in coverage can be compensated for, however, by individual counseling.

I have revised, tentatively, the program of the first course in accordance with these criticisms. A draft of the revised program is attached to and is a part of this report for the consideration by the committee.

Two other aspects of the first program deserve a brief comment. First, the agricultural environment this program added very considerably to its effectiveness as was particularly notable in the discussions of the group. Not only was the environment a familiar one but the use of agricultural programs as examples stimulated the interest of the participants. They were studying not just administration per se but the administration of programs of which they had some knowledge and which were similar in many ways to ones in which they were engaged. I am not arguing here the old question of whether administration should be taught as such or as the administration of X program, but the fact remains that the common knowledge of subject-matter was a definite aid to teaching. This agricultural context of the program contributed largely to whatever success we achieved in emphasizing the importance of administration in agricultural programs.

Second, we need to contrive means of obtaining more assistance from the participants in planning the successive programs. Their assistance after the program begins is useful but not sufficient. In the revised announcement of the fall program I have asked the participants to write to me as soon as possible if they wish to suggest additions to the course. That arrangement, however, is not entirely adequate. In the future we should consult the prospective class members at the earliest possible time as to their special interests in administration. I realize that the time in which this can be done is limited by the methods of selection but I still believe we will be able to improve on the present system when the recruitment procedure has been fully developed.

In conclusion, it is a pleasure to say that this was truly a cooperative program. The Graduate School had the continuous assistance of the staff of the Training Division of the FAS and of the staff of the Public Administration Training Branch of the ICA as well as that of the advisory committee. And the agencies of the USDA as well as the Maryland Extension Service gave us the assistance we requested and more. Whatever success the program achieved is due in large part to the interest and contributions of the men and women of these organizations.